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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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September 11, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Weapons Systems, Military Capabilities, and Perceptions

You will recall the meeting of the NSC on August 15, on the subject of U.S.-Soviet competition with special reference to the military balance. The issue of the relationship of U.S. weapons systems programs to public and governmental perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet balance has been raised at that meeting and since.

I have been giving further thought to this matter, and have reached a number of preliminary conclusions. These are listed below and are followed by a list of specific systems. I believe we need to proceed with a substantial selection of these in order to respond both to military needs and to political perceptions.

1. Though each of the major (and some of the minor) programmatic cancellations and deferrals effected by this Administration was made for sound programmatic reasons, cumulatively they have combined with the relative paucity of new starts to convey the impression, both to our allies and to some of our own public, of unreciprocated unilateral restraint--our detractors would say, unilateral disarmament. We do not know how the Soviets view these matters, but we should also be concerned about their perception.

2. We need to begin some systems that can be identified as initiatives of this Administration. Differing degrees of program commitment--full-scale development, production, deployment--are appropriate for consideration, depending on the particular case. But nothing less than full-scale deployment will count in the actual military balance, and at least some of these systems will have to be deployed if we are to change perceptions.

3. Military utility, relative effectiveness, and cost should be the principal criteria for going ahead with such new systems. But anticipated political effects, particularly effects on our allies or on the Soviets, can weigh heavily in such decisions. These effects include such considerations as the creation of parity in a geographical area or at a particular level of escalation; the promotion of arms control agreements; or the conveying of a sense of U.S. technological superiority.

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4. In general, strategic systems will have the greatest effect on perceptions, though there are exceptions--ERW, for example.

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Here are some examples of systems whose implementation would affect perceptions as well as military capabilities. Because they are not equivalent in nature, I do not present them as alternatives. However, I believe we will have to move forward with a substantial number of them to have a significant effect.

I emphasize that funds for the next steps have been programmed for very few of these systems. Thus any encouragement engendered by the thought that these systems exemplify the lead we could have over the Soviets in technology should be severely tempered. What this memorandum contains are ideas, potential development programs, and possible prospective deployments. These by no means offset the Soviet forces in being, or the Soviet systems in serial production.

Moreover, the systems described below are not a substitute for an increase in the size of the defense program. They are the part of what would constitute an increased program, specific reasons for increased expenditures. In no way could they substitute for the rest of our forces and defense costs; they are examples of the additions that need to be made in order to offset the military and perceptual advantages that the Soviets have been accumulating. They are opportunities: advantageous if taken (or, rather, bought); useless if forgone.

1. M-X. Next decision is full-scale development, separately or in a joint program with Trident C-5 missile. Without it, we will not have even by the late 1980's a quick-response hard-target capability comparable to that the Soviets will possess early in the 1980's. A related question is survivability, both short-term and enduring. OK

2. Alternate launch point land-based system. Some mobile system of this kind (there are two or three alternatives) can assure a survivable land-based ICBM, not dependent on warning, provided a solution can be found to the outstanding technical and cost problems. Other alternatives for increasing survivability will have comparable costs, but different balances of military value and political difficulties. ?

3. B-X. A new bomber, of range and payload comparable with that of Backfire, but more effective, because of recent very significant technological advances, of which you are aware. This bomber would be greatly superior to the Backfire (and the B-1) in ability to penetrate air defenses because of a combination of low detectability features,

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Improved countermeasures and improved defensive systems. It would be particularly effective in combination with a cruise missile attack because the "fixes" to the Soviet air defense required for the cruise missiles would be at cross-purposes with those required for the bomber (and vice versa). As you are aware, we could start full-scale development of such a bomber as early as 1979 and achieve IOC by 1984. Juxtaposition with B-1 could pose some political problems, but also has some potential for political justification--as you know, we had it in mind when the B-1 was cancelled.

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4. ERW. Political perception exceeds purely military effect. Production of modernized 8" and Lance nuclear warheads that can be deployed without ERW but converted in months to ERW is a feasible and low-dollar-cost option (given the need to modernize in any event), at the cost of some degradation in military effectiveness if the ERW conversion never is made.

ok ?

5. GLCM. One way to offset Soviet long-range theater nuclear forces. At the protocol deployment limit of 600 km, GLCMs (and SLCMs) cannot reach the Soviet Union from the FRG, though Soviet 600-km GLCMs from East Europe (or SLCMs) can reach all of FRG. But at the 2500-km test range limit, GLCMs can reach much of European U.S.S.R. from the FRG and the U.K. (as can SLCMs of that range from the oceans adjacent to Europe). These systems are in full-scale development--the next issue is deployment. To deploy in the early 1980's will require acceleration of the process of making basing arrangements, planning targeting, etc.

ok ?

6. Pershing II (XR-extended range). Range to 1500 km. Not limited by SALT, but NATO option III offered to the Soviets in MBFR reduces numbers of Pershings by 36 and limits the U.S. to 72 launchers for SSMs of range greater than 500 km. Would be a new development; much larger and less mobile than GLCM.

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7. Tactical cruise missiles of radius in the 1000-km category, with terminal guidance (10-foot accuracy or better), carrying conventional warheads, and reusable--to reduce costs greatly. Needs a bit more thought about targets (I am pushing the concept hard) but could soon be ready for full-scale development.

MIRV's ?

8. Cannon-launched Guided Projectiles (Copperhead). Introduction of laser guidance to artillery shells will allow us to employ the thousands of artillery tubes already deployed as precision guided weapons capable of making a direct hit on a moving tank at ranges in excess of 10 kilometers. We will begin production of laser-guided shells in 1979, reaching IOC in 1980.

ok ?

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9. Assault Breaker. This program is a new initiative intended to break up an assault of massed armor without using nuclear warheads. It applies the MIRV concept to tactical forces: a tactical missile is launched at a column of tanks; as it approaches the column, its warhead separates into 20 or 30 bomblets, each of which has a heat seeker which guides that bomblet to an individual tank. Development has just started, but we have the program on an accelerated pace to achieve a field demonstration in 1981 and to begin production in 1983. *ok?*

10. Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM). This will be our first "fire and forget" missile. It will allow USAF and naval air to achieve air superiority even if outnumbered. This missile will out-range missiles on Soviet aircraft and allow our F-15s and F-16s to engage two or three aircraft at a time since the radar guidance system in AMRAAM becomes autonomous shortly after launch (current air-to-air systems are either short-range or require the aircraft's radar to track the target during the entire flight of the missile). We have just begun an accelerated development of this missile and expect to begin production in 1984. *ok?*

11. SURTASS. The Surface Towed Array Surveillance System is a new submarine detection and tracking sensor that is the result of a major breakthrough in acoustic array technology. This 8000-ft-long line array will be towed behind surface ships accompanying carrier task forces, or can be used in conjunction with the present SOSUS bottom-mounted arrays to extend the coverage and accuracy of the SOSUS system. Whereas previous ship sonars or arrays were limited to detection ranges of the order of 10 to 100 miles, SURTASS will have a range of [redacted] depending on propagation factors. SURTASS can be used also to provide a submarine surveillance or ASW capability in remote regions where we do not have bottom-mounted arrays, e.g., the Indian Ocean. The system will become operational in 1981 on the TAGOS ships. *ok?*

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As the programming and budget process proceeds, I shall be considering systems and ideas that we will want to implement. Technology offers us one possible way to offset some of the advantages the Soviets hold in so many aspects of the military balance; but unless we move from the idea stage to tangible increases in capability, the ideas will not mean very much.

A number of these initiatives can take major steps toward incorporation into our military capabilities in the FY 80 program. Others will do so later. I and others in DoD will be considering with Cy and Zbig now to make maximum use of these actions internationally, and with the Vice President in terms of domestic perceptions. At some key internal decision points you will wish to make your own inputs on the interaction of perceptions and [redacted]. You may wish to make the key [redacted] yourself.

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